



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

This its strength and its merit. Altho the work will probably be superseded in parts by more exhaustive studies, it will remain of great value as an outline, especially if brought up to date at the end of the war.

N. S. B. GRAS.

CLARK COLLEGE,
WORCESTER, MASS.

HISTORY OF LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES ¹

It is impossible in a review notice to do justice to the excellence of this two volume study of the history of the labor movement in the United States. It is indeed a fitting conclusion to twelve years of research and compilation on the part of Professor Commons and his collaborators.

These volumes, as well as that most valuable collection of sources, *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, were made possible through the life-long sympathetic interest of Professor R. T. Ely in the history and problems of organized labor. In 1886, he stated in the preface of his *Labor Movement in America*, "I offer this book merely as a sketch which will, I trust, some day be followed by a book worthy of the title *History of Labor in the New World*. He never forgot that ideal, and about twenty years later was able to interest various persons who aided financially to such an extent that a staff of assistants, working under Professor Commons, was employed to comb the country for labor data and to write the finished story of the endeavors of the American workers to better their condition. A seminar in "Labor" was also organized at Wisconsin under Professor Commons, and graduate students made detailed studies of special phases of the labor movement, some of which have been published. Many of them have been freely

¹ History of Labour in the United States. By John R. Commons, David J. Saposs, Helen L. Sumner, E. B. Mittelman, H. E. Hoagland, John B. Andrews, Selig Perlman, with an introductory note by Henry W. Farnam. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1918. Vol. i, pp. xxv, 623; vol. ii, pp. xx, 620.

drawn upon by the collaborators, possibly a little too freely without adequate credit being given to their authors.

Only those who have been in touch with the venture know the magnitude of the task. The scope of the field to be covered, the vast variety of problems to be studied and interpreted, the untangling of the threads of evidence and their proper piecing together, and, last but most important, the difficulty of collecting the data upon which the story was to be based, were but a few of the obstacles to be overcome. Throughout all the years of research and writing, the work has gone on under the immediate supervision of Professor Commons. With his usual modesty and desire for "fair play," he has, however, taken credit to himself for only the short introductory chapter. It is really to be regretted that only those of us who have watched the work from its inception realize how fully these volumes owe their existence, their very contents, almost their every statement to his guiding genius. He gives his assistants, however, full and complete credit for those parts of which they had the writing. A statement to the above effect would not have been out of place in the introductory note by Professor Farnam. While great praise is due Professor Commons and his collaborators for the most successful and admirable completion of their task, credit is also due to Professor Ely, whose vision, sympathetic interest and initiative, made possible this consummation of his early ideal.

The first volume opens with a short chapter by Professor Commons in which it is made clear that the study concerns itself, not with the forms, structure, and policies of organized labor, but with the background of the labor movement, its philosophies, its activities, the conditions — social, political, economic — out of which it came. The interpretation proposed is a combination of interpretations, omitting only the more recent "behaviouristic" and "instinct" approach, which finds no place in the story that follows. Professor Commons sketches only in the barest outline the influence of free land, political institutions, the spreading network of transportation, the courts, immigration, price fluctuations,

etc., upon the developing activities of the workers, leaving to his associates the telling of the detailed narrative which substantiates fully his introductory statements. All available data are used by them in the interpretation of the origin, success, and failure of the labor movement of each period, different periods requiring "different kinds of treatment and different degrees of detail."

The narrative proper opens rather slowly with a section of 140 pages on "Colonial and Federal Beginnings to 1827" by David J. Saposs. Much piecing together of the scanty threads of data is necessary for this early period, but Mr. Saposs accomplishes his purpose in a thoroly satisfactory manner. He places the "first authentic organization of a single trade" and the first strike at 1786 in Philadelphia, and the beginning of the American labor movement at 1827, again in Philadelphia. This chronology runs counter to certain allegations made by others, but sufficient material is supplied to substantiate his statements.

Part II, "Citizenship (1827-1833)," comprising 163 pages, by Dr. Helen L. Sumner, moves a little more rapidly. The data were more available; the story runs more clearly along working class lines, and revolves almost solely around the efforts of the workers to profit by political activity, altho this period furnishes some *bona fide* trade union activities, not to overlook the formation of the first central labor council in the world in Philadelphia in 1827. The establishment of public schools, the enactment of mechanics' lien laws, the abolition of imprisonment for debt and of compulsory military service, the revision of the currency — all were secured as the results of the assertion of "the rights of persons against the rights of property."

Part III, "Trade Unionism (1833-1839)," 149 pages, by Edward B. Mittelman, discloses the swing towards trade unionism, the growth of city central councils, the formation and activities of the National Trades' Union, and the abortive efforts to establish national trade unions in various fields, concluding with the story of the disintegration of the union movement following the panic of 1837.

Part IV, "Humanitarianism (1840-1860)," 136 pages, by Henry E. Hoagland, discusses the effects of the increased immigration of the forties, the continued and more widespread efforts of the workers towards the solution of their problems through coöperative colonies and other coöperative activities, the homestead movement, the proceedings of the various Industrial Congresses, and finally the development of the "New Trade Unionism."

Volume II is given over completely to the period following 1860. Dr. John B. Andrews devotes 191 pages (Part V) to bringing the story down to 1877. He admirably covers the Civil War conditions and their effects upon the labor movement, the development of national trade unions, the history of the National Labor Union (1866-72), and the subsequent disintegration following the panic of 1873.

Part VI, "Upheaval and Reorganization (since 1876)," by Selig Perlman, treats of the more recent activities of the workers, discussing the secret and revolutionary beginnings of the seventies, the efforts towards national federation, the Greenback Labor Party, the growth of socialistic, anarchistic, and syndicalistic influences, the rise and fall of the Knights of Labor, the Great Upheaval (1884-86), and the formation and subsequent history of the American Federation of Labor. A most excellent bibliographical note concludes the volume.

The work of Professor Commons and his collaborators has been admirably done. It is definitive, and I doubt if much will ever be added to their narrative dealing with the history of labor in the United States down to 1896. Too high praise cannot be given this collective piece of research and authorship. It has done for the United States what the *History of Trade Unionism* by the Webbs did for England, altho, for various evident reasons, it gives a much more complete and detailed, tho a somewhat more complicated, story than does the latter work.

I hesitate to offer any criticism of this most admirable study for fear that what I write may be taken as mere caviling.

There are certain matters, however, that should be mentioned, in all deference to the excellence of the authors' work.

This study has the defects of any coöperative work, altho to a less extent than is usual. Altho the facts are ably presented and all possible data are included, and altho the same method of interpretation is followed throughout, the story does not always run smoothly where it is picked up by the succeeding writer. It is a story of periods, each period being treated practically as complete in itself, with scant reference to what has gone before or what is to follow. I laid down the volumes with the wish that Professor Commons had written it all and had given credit in footnotes and preface to his assistants, just as they have so frequently done to others upon whose monographs, published and unpublished, they have so freely drawn. Greater continuity could have been secured thereby. We would have had a master treatment of all the materials by Professor Commons, not as an adviser and collaborator, but as the actual writer and interpreter of every part of the interesting story.

I must also confess that the narrative left me "cold." It is factual and interpretative, but it fails to breathe the trials and sorrows, the spirit, the upward seeking, the "heart throbs" — if such a term may be used — of the labor movement. In these days of the twentieth century there is no need of making a study of labor, whether it be historical or otherwise, too scientifically and academically cold.

The treatment of the period from 1896 down to date is woefully inadequate, only one chapter being devoted thereto. It omits many extremely important events, and frequently refers to matters in a way that will make its contents understood only by those who have kept closely in touch with the labor movement of the last twenty years. As the chapter now stands, it had better not have been published. It is a distinct anti-climax to an otherwise excellent study.

Any careful reader will wonder why Appendix I (First dates on which trade societies appeared in New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Boston, 1833-39) and Appendix II (Strikes, 1833-37) have been included in Part III, and why appendices giving similar data for other periods have not been added to each succeeding part. The scheme of beginning a new series

of footnote numbers in a chapter as soon as footnote 100 has been reached is somewhat confusing. The advisability of the extremely long topical headings at the opening of each chapter, sometimes extending over a full page, must also be questioned. A satisfactory index, or even the mere citation of sectional headings would have been just as effective.

In a detailed and comprehensive study like this, slight errors are bound to appear. The following are some that I noted in passing. In footnote 19, volume i, p. 237, Thomas Paine is listed as an atheist. He was not an atheist, believing, as he declared in his *Age of Reason*, in "one God and no more," and hoping "for happiness beyond this life." On p. 611 of volume i, the statement is made that "The most extraordinary advances in wages occurred in San Francisco [in 1853] which, however, must be considered exceptional." Then follows a statement of the wages paid at that time, altho no comparative data are given to show just how great the increase really was. The scale of wages then existing in San Francisco was admittedly high, and data available for that period show that some increases had been granted; but the increases were slight, and the wages actually paid did not approximate those existing a few years earlier. On p. 108 of volume ii it is stated that "No record is obtainable of the report of this Committee" [of the California Legislature on the advisability of changing the hours of the legal work-day]. The report in question can be found on p. 578 of California Assembly Journal, 16th Session. An error is also made in accepting Buchanan's statement (ii, 299) that B. G. Haskell, a labor leader in San Francisco in the eighties, never practised his profession as a lawyer, and that his philosophy was "state socialism combined with an opposition to either political action or violence for the present." Haskell did practise his profession for some time. His philosophy varied considerably from year to year, and represented an evolution from state socialism through socialism, philosophical anarchism, violence, communism, and just prior to his death, political action. Waltershausen, *Die nordamerikanischen Gewerkschaften*, p. 138, is cited in footnote 21, p. 311 of volume

ii, as authority for the statement that "In San Francisco the New York Amalgamated Trades and Labor Union had the right of making compulsory assessments until 1881." Waltershausen, however, credits the San Francisco Trades Assembly, not the New York central labor body, with that power.

The above errors, however, are inconsequential. These volumes are so excellently done that one can almost question the advisability of calling attention to such slight mistakes.

This study is unquestionably the greatest contribution thus far made to our literature dealing with the labor field in the United States. We still need a volume comparable to Webb's *Industrial Democracy*, and also one dealing more fully with the happenings since 1896. May we not hope for such books by these same authors or by others before many years have passed.

IRA B. CROSS.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.